

DESIGN + BUILD

**Workplace collaboration
and the future of work**

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That's according to a recent Randstad research, the future of work is likely to be hybrid. Based on the study, more than half of workers (54%) say they prefer a flexible work arrangement that allows them to work both on-site and remotely beyond the pandemic.

Throughout the past couple of years, to survive and remain competitive, many businesses have had to streamline operations, adopt new technologies, and even rethink their entire business models. However, the biggest challenge for most companies is making sure that all employees are engaged and productive in this new working environment.

As organizations recover and rebuild from the effects of the pandemic, they have to rethink how the physical office looks and operates. They need to create a workplace that facilitates effective collaboration - even in a hybrid model. The goal is to ensure that people in the office and those working from home have the same experiences and level of engagement.

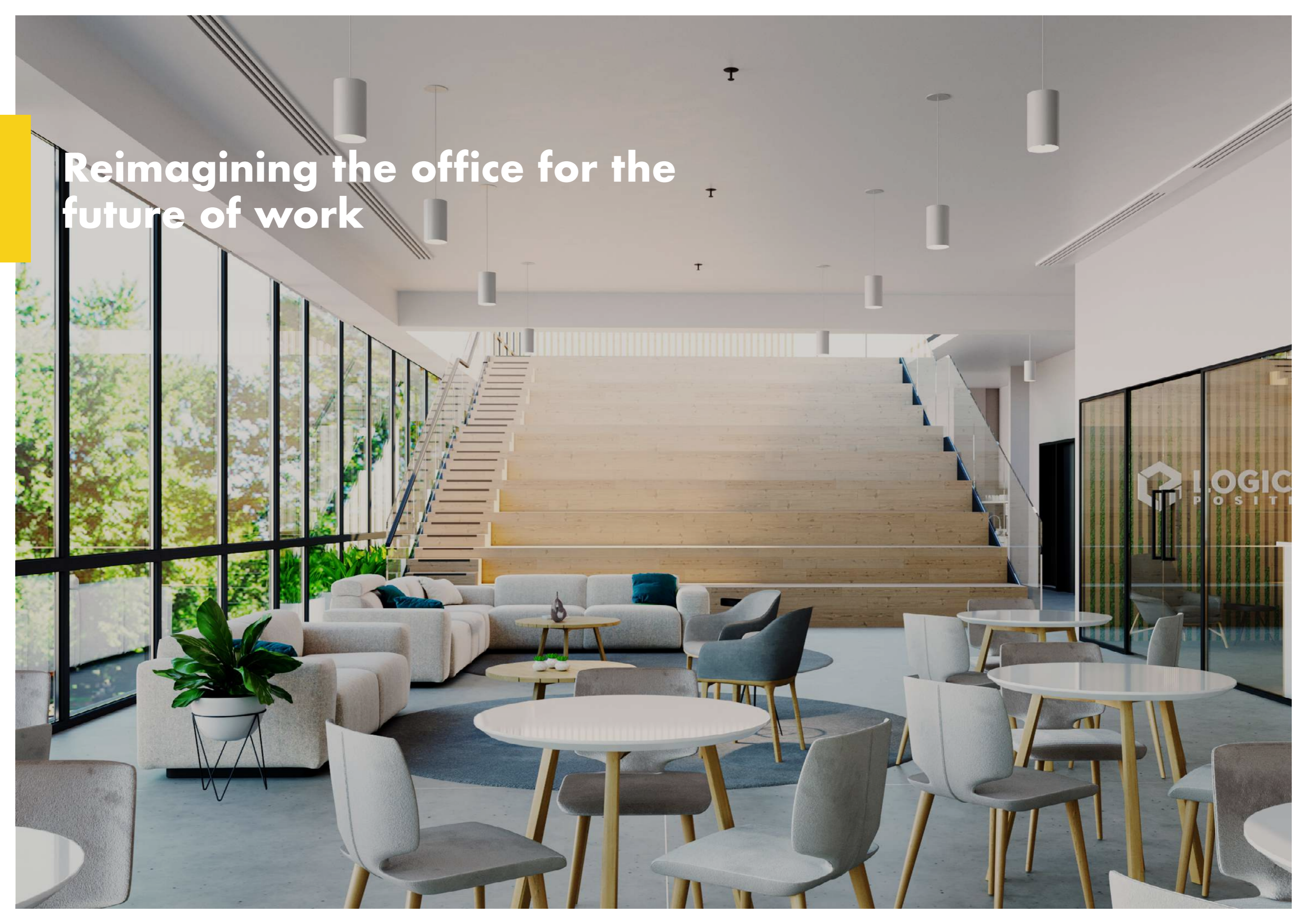
Seamless connection between the physical and virtual space has moved from a 'nice to have' aspect to an essential part of a successful business.

So, how do you design a workplace that works for all?

Do you offer more flexibility for staff, yet find it challenging to keep them engaged and productive in this new hybrid workplace?

In this whitepaper, we'll highlight ways that your business can adapt and design an office that enables your employees to work effectively and collaborate successfully in this new era of hybrid workplaces.

Reimagining the office for the future of work





Organizations must reimagine their work and the role of offices in creating safe, productive, and enjoyable jobs and lives for employees.

- McKinsey

The future of work is already here. It's happening in workplaces in every industry across the globe. Businesses that adapt to changes and can redefine their idea of an office will stand a better chance of thriving now and in the future.

The goal is to create a better employee experience, enhance collaboration, and boost productivity within a hybrid working environment. The new workspace is not limited to your physical office but includes the unseen. It consists of a virtual workspace that connects all your employees, whether co-located or working remotely. It's therefore essential that your physical workspace supports virtual, as well as physical, collaboration.

Some adjustments will be minor and easy to make. Still, larger, more impactful changes will take your business to the next level of productivity, efficiency, and employee satisfaction.

Here are some things to consider when preparing your workspace:

Office Tech

A primary consideration when preparing your workspace is choosing the right technology for your staff. Start by implementing office technologies that provide a consistent experience across your hybrid workplace – whether people are using the tools and apps through mobile devices, laptops, desktop computers, in the office, or at home.

Consider enabling your office with BYOD (“bring your own device”) connections, video conferencing, and proper acoustic design to support collaboration between those onsite and those working remotely.

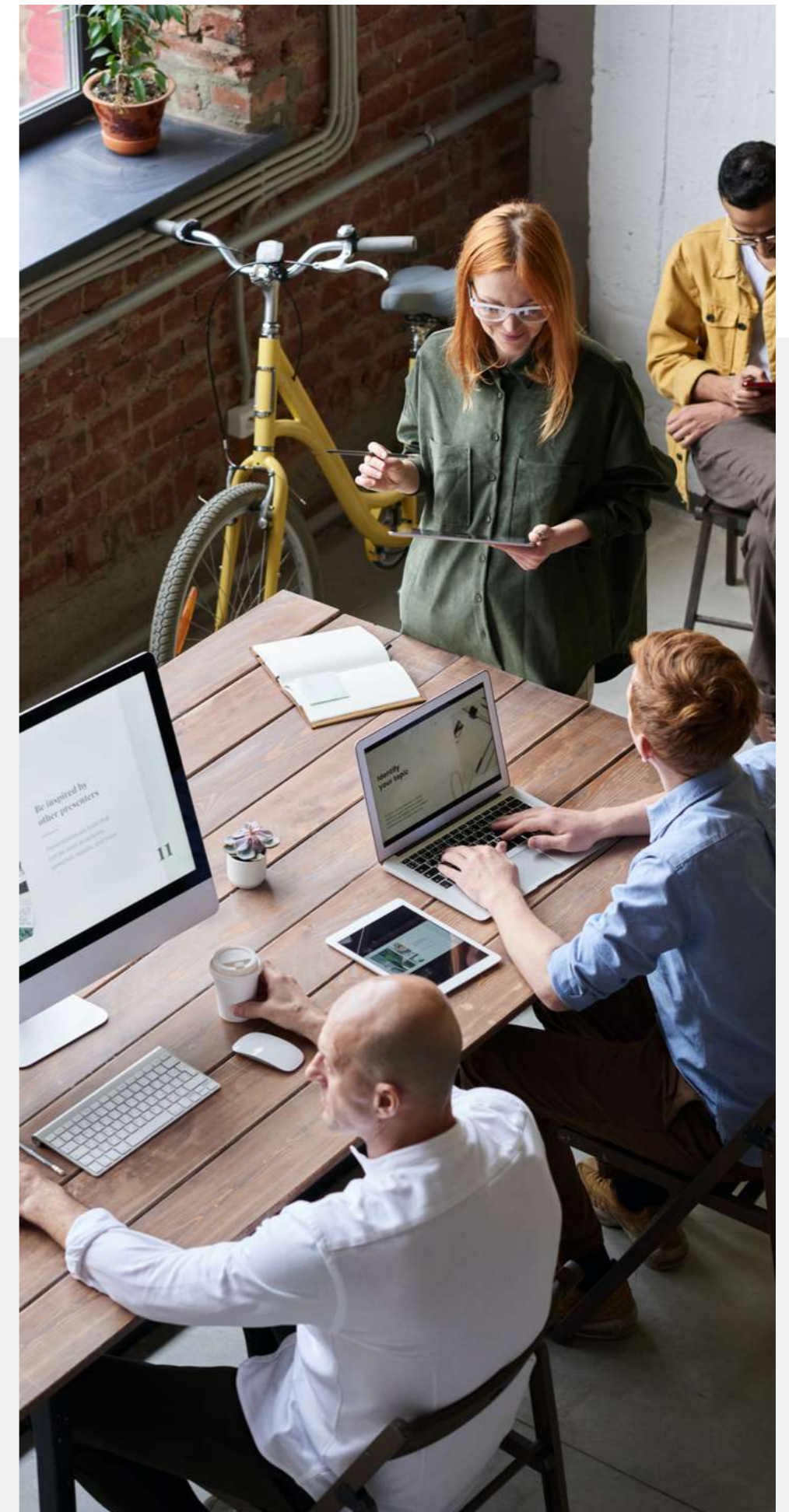
Smart location, resource, desk and room booking systems make it easy for employees to have access to different environments in the office and even encourage cross collaboration between departments and individuals that might not typically work together.

Layout

When preparing your workspace for the future of work, you must have a comprehensive review of the office floor plan or layout. This includes identifying spaces that have the potential to be used in a different way to help improve employee collaboration and engagement.

The hybrid workplace focuses on breaking down barriers between remote and on-site workers. So, your new office design needs to remove unnecessary physical barriers and include open spaces, shared workspaces and even outdoor work areas. DESIGN+BUILD recently worked with Logical Positions, one of INC magazine's fastest-growing digital marketing companies in the U.S. to design a fit-for-purpose workplace that cultivated connectedness and collaboration for employees.

The DESIGN+BUILD team designed a central staircase at the very heart of the LP new office, with tiered seating where employees could gather. The space connected to a breakout zone on another floor by a staircase, further emphasizing the idea of connectedness to build a sense of community.



EXIT

**How agility can facilitate collaboration
for hybrid teams**



The Boston Consulting Group (BCG) defines agile as “a team-centered, iterative, and cross-functional approach applied across industries and business contexts. Born in software development, agility prioritizes speed, autonomy, and collaboration to unlock the hidden potential of organizations.”

Most agile teams were ready to adapt when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. These teams had agile working practices, such as remote decision-making, which made it easy for them to adapt. Agility allows teams to move swiftly in crisis mode, shift processes quickly, and adapt to new working methods. Based on a recent survey, companies implementing at least two agile practices were more likely to increase productivity with remote teams.

As more businesses move to hybrid work environments, enabling agile working methods becomes more important than ever. Here are a few reasons why:

Provides work patterns and routines

Whether people are working at home or in the office, agile working provides healthy and regular routines, including daily “stand-up” sessions and weekly team reviews. Especially important during uncertain times, these routines create a sense of normalcy and a positive frame of mind. In addition, the work patterns help teams get used to new processes and procedures – allowing them to get accustomed and move forward quickly.

Enables quick changes

Agility allows teams and organizations to adjust goals, priorities, and protocols quickly. In addition, the agile approach breaks down work into smaller, more easily worked units or tasks. This gives teams more flexibility in adjusting their direction to better adapt to changes in business environments, including shifts in customer and employee expectations.

Empowers teams and individuals

Agility empowers team members to make decisions rather than waiting for a manager or business leader to make the necessary calls.

By giving individual team members the ability to make quick decisions, the business becomes more flexible, adaptive, and responsive to the customers’ needs or market turns. This is particularly beneficial for remote teams, who sometimes feel isolated and left out during decision-making. Being able to make decisions empowers them and makes them feel like a more significant part of the team.

So, how can agile facilitate collaboration in the hybrid workplace? We think it creates a resilient workforce. It creates an empowered, rich, and successful connection between teams. It does so because the drive for success becomes both intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsically because the team member is feeling valued and effective. Extrinsically because that same member gets to see their team’s success, it’s a win-win situation. It creates a situation where: when you are doing good, your team is also doing good.





**How technology can enhance collaboration
in the future workplace**



53% think technological breakthroughs will transform the way people work over the 5 – 10 years.

- **The future of work: A journey to 2022 by PwC**

Technology is an integral part of the workplace and how we work. For example, collaborative technologies have grown to drive how we communicate, connect, and manage team projects/ workflows.

We touched on office technology as a significant consideration in preparing your workplace due to the critical connectivity requirement and inclusiveness for all participants. This section goes a bit deeper into workplace technology trends and how they can enhance collaboration in a new hybrid environment.

Rules of engagement

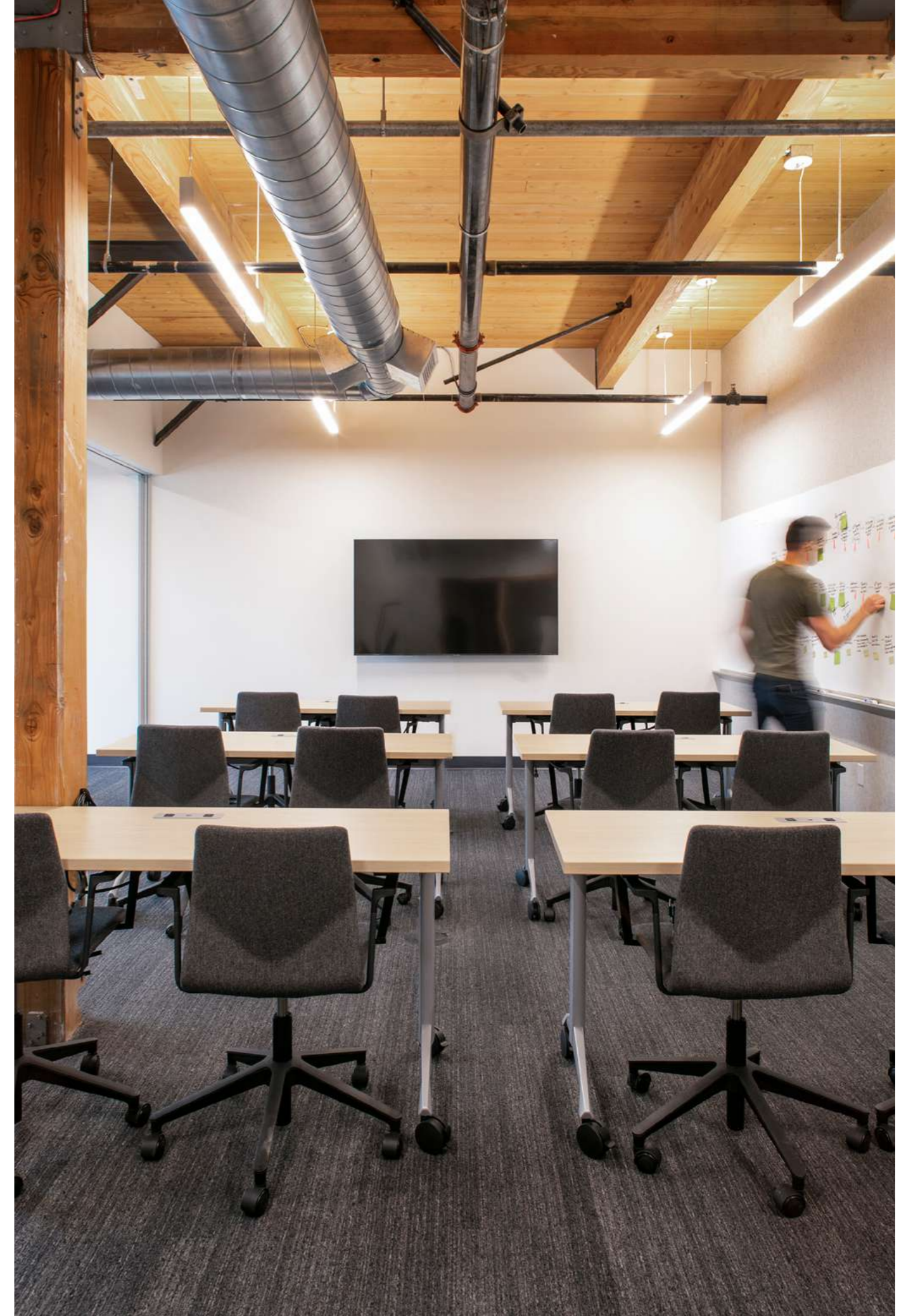
It's easy to get tied up with the different types of technology you may want to integrate into the workplace. But it's important to remember that the office is not just about space and technology. First and foremost, it's about the people who work there – people who will use the space and technology simultaneously to connect, collaborate, and do the work they need to do.

So, before implementing any office technology, consider setting clear guidelines first. Ask questions such as: "What type of work needs to be done? Who will be the main users? How will technology be used to connect, engage and communicate?"

Technology that works anywhere

Whether they are working remotely or onsite, the collaboration between team members becomes more manageable if your technology is equipped to work from anywhere. Nowadays, work can be done from desktops, laptops, mobiles, or tablets. Studies suggest that most workers want the flexibility to work anywhere, at home, in the office, or at a local coffee shop.

This luxury is no longer optional. Many companies need to adapt to have the technology that enables employees to work anywhere, anytime works wonders in enhancing team collaboration and boosting productivity.





Tech-centered meeting spaces

You've likely had the experience of doing a video call with a team and feeling like you couldn't hear or see what was happening in the room properly. To avoid this situation, video technology and meeting room acoustics need to account for the virtual and physical presence to provide a seamless experience for all meeting attendees.

Virtual brainstorming and creative sessions

As with meetings, creative sessions will also need to straddle the physical and virtual worlds to create a seamless experience for all employees. Video and acoustic setups will need to consider that not everyone is

physically in the room. The physical whiteboard has also now gone virtual. Cloud-based virtual whiteboard applications allow users to collaborate simultaneously – putting all participants on a level playing field. Unlike a traditional whiteboard, the bonus is that your session's outputs will be available and saved digitally in an easy-to-action format.

Digital collaboration tools

There is nothing quite like being in the office to ask a quick question of a colleague. But the hybrid workplace means that your colleague may no longer be next to you all the time. Enter instant messaging tools, like Teams and Slack, which allow you to communicate with a person or a team directly, or video call someone for a face-to-face chat.

Tools such as Google Workspace and Microsoft 365 enable multiple users to work directly on the same document, spreadsheet, or presentation, collaborating in real-time.

Artificial intelligence (AI), Augmented reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR)

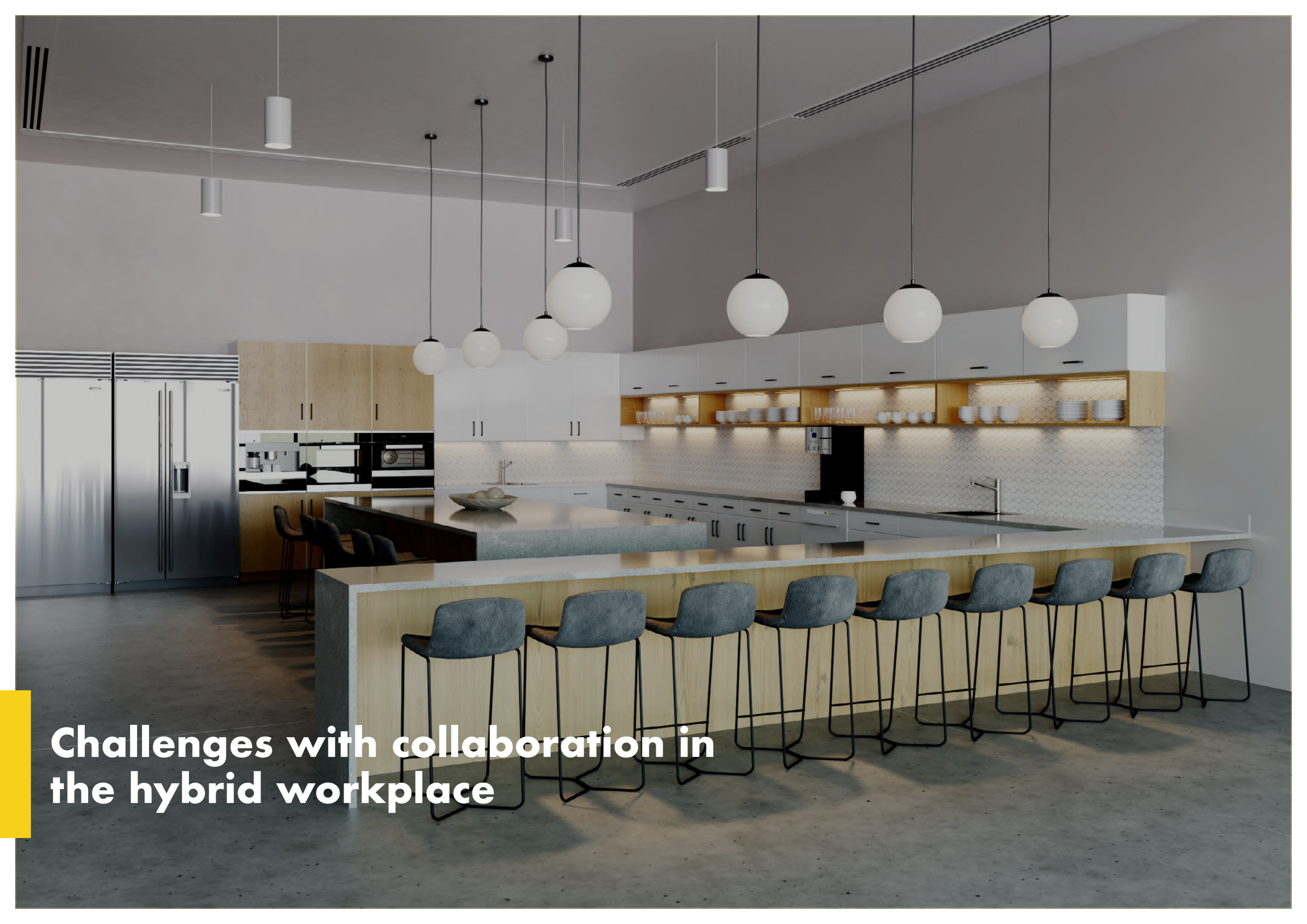
It is known that AI, AR (augmented reality), and VR (virtual reality) tools will soon be commonly used in offices and remote workplaces. Experts predict that AI will transform collaboration for the future workforce as companies streamline and automate more processes. Some applications of AI include facial recognition, real-time language translation, automated notetaking, intelligent transcription services, and greater automation of routine tasks.

One thing to note though:

Privacy and security will remain a major concern

As digital collaboration tools increase adoption with workers connecting online from different locations (using other devices), privacy and security remain significant issues for businesses. Without proper safety checks and controls, a hybrid workplace can open the company to potential risks like data and identity theft, online hacking, malware, and computer viruses.

It's crucial to implement the necessary safety protocols and access controls, plus clear security policies and guidelines. These basic measures can help protect your company's information and data.



**Challenges with collaboration in
the hybrid workplace**

25) Maintaining data privacy and security is just one of the ongoing challenges with collaboration in the hybrid workplace. In the past, it's been difficult enough for teams to work together when being in the same room or office. There's the added complexity of working in hybrid teams, where some are in the office, and others are at home or in a remote location.

Effective hybrid collaboration takes more than just implementing the latest technology or setting up collaborative meeting spaces. It requires reviewing your entire work environment, encompassing everything from the virtual to the physical aspects of the workplace, including the personal dynamics of each team.

The process starts with understanding the challenges that lie ahead. Here are some ways that collaboration may be limited in the hybrid workplace if these issues aren't well addressed:

+ Seamless connectivity

Even with the latest Wi-Fi technologies and the fastest broadband speeds, connecting to virtual meetings or online chats isn't always 100% guaranteed. Connections can drop, apps or software can stall, video can freeze, and audio can become choppy. In addition, numerous technical issues can affect both hardware and software, so it is extra vital for hybrid teams to be understanding and find ways to work around these unavoidable inconveniences.

+ Open communication & transparency

Communication can be a grave issue in hybrid workplaces. Sometimes, remote workers can miss out on important information because it was communicated in person and not digitally. This becomes especially common when delivering sensitive or personal information because most people still feel most comfortable face-to-face. However, most major corporate communication tools (Slack, Teams, etc.) have powerful security features that can offer peace of mind. Nevertheless, it can still sometimes be difficult to have open and honest communication with remote workers.

+ Equal participation

This is a challenge even for onsite teams who meet face-to-face. And now, including remote team members makes it more difficult to include everyone in a meeting and have equal participation.

+ Connected and unified workforce

With employees working from home, there is a tendency for people to work in isolation. Various reasons and preferences can cause this, but essentially is when they become used to working on their own, with minimal interaction with other team members. This can profoundly negatively impact the company culture and result in a disconnected workforce.

+ Employee wellbeing

Isolation can be a big issue for employees working from home. Building relationships and social connections are best made in person. However, most people still prefer physically spending time with colleagues in the workplace. Video conferencing tools and chat applications help, but it's not the same as engaging or collaborating face-to-face.

How do you conquer these challenges?

Use the information in this whitepaper to inform your workplace strategy and overcome these common hurdles, ensuring your workplace is set up for successful collaboration in the future of work. Reach out to the team at DESIGN+BUILD and work with us to develop your holistic workplace strategy.



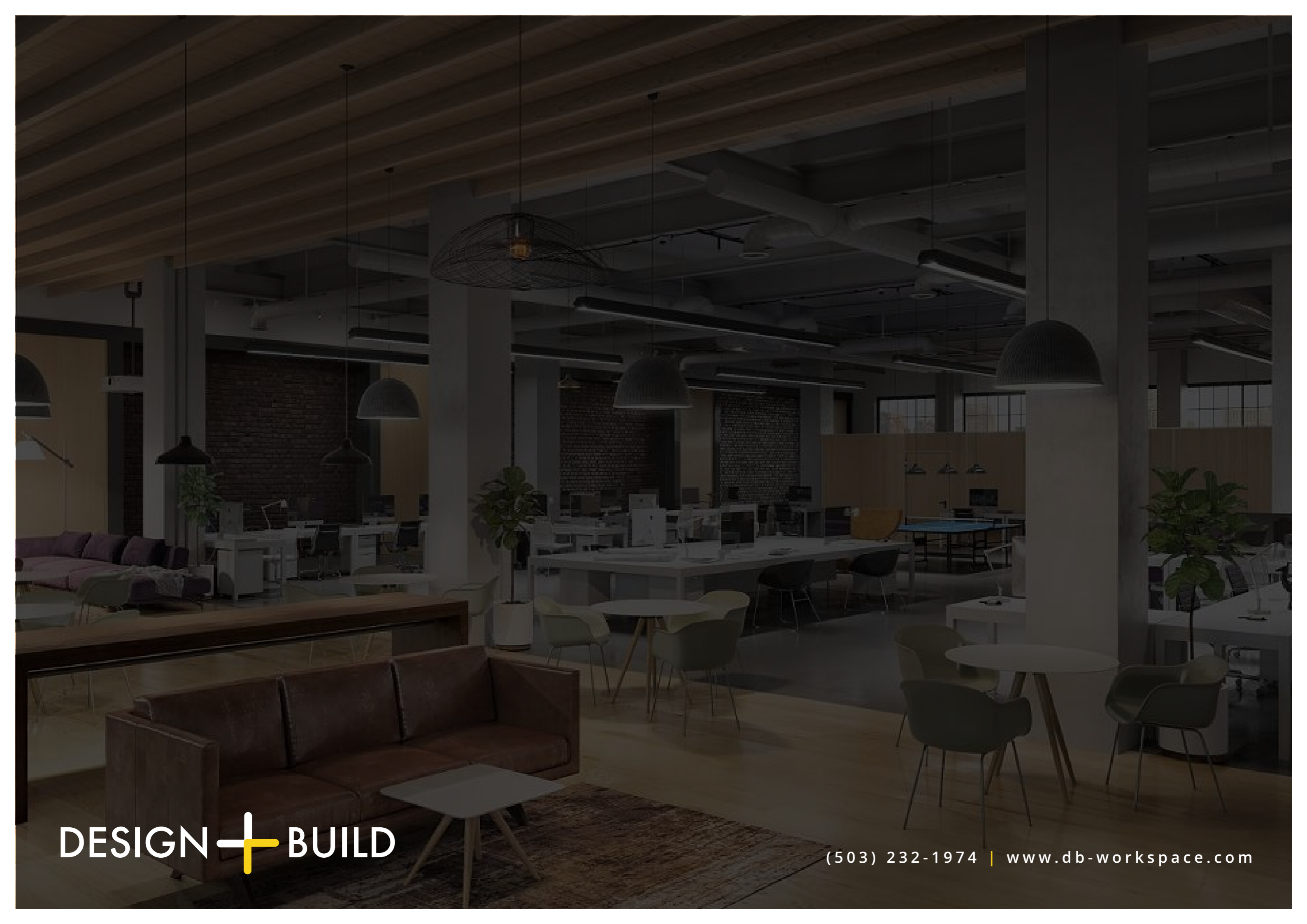


Conclusion

There is no debate that the future of work is hybrid. However, collaborating effectively in a hybrid environment has numerous challenges and won't be seamless initially. Success will require businesses to rethink their work environment, including people, workspaces, and technology.

The future of work needs to be agile and span the physical and virtual workspace, creating the same experience and level of engagement for employees working remotely or at the office.

At DESIGN+BUILD, our proven workplace strategy and design process aim to understand your company's current realities and business objectives while considering your plans and requirements. Contact us today, and find out how we can help you design an office that enhances employee and team collaboration within a hybrid work environment.



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